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MOJO PRESENTS

Depeche Mode

Classics. Rarities. Revelations.

1 Ice Machine
(Single Version)

The B-side to Depeche Mode's first single Dreaming Of Me, Ice Machine could easily serve as the group's early manifesto – delivering chills and electronic thrills amid a litany of modernity's bugbears, including the great god Efficiency. Other than the repetition of "resurrect", Vince Clarke has fully pivoted from Christian folk songwriter to dystopian visionary.

(3:53). Written by Vincent Clarke. Published by Musical Moments Ltd./Sonet (PRS). ℗1981 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From *Speak & Spell* (1981)

2 Somebody
(Remix)

This mix of Gore's ingenuous ballad debuted on the UK 7-inch of Blasphemous Rumours in October 1984. It starts with a heartbeat and a synthy hint of raindrops before Martin Gore and Alan Wilder (on keys) bring the piano bar *Weltschmerz*. If Gore sounds vulnerable, maybe even chilly, he sang it naked in Hansa's cellar, scaring Steffi, the female tape op.

(4:20). Written by Martin L. Gore. Published by Grabbing Hands Music Ltd./EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS). ℗1984 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From *Some Great Reward* (1984)

3 A Question Of Time
(New Town Mix)

'Fresh' off of Coil's The Anal Staircase EP, ex-Lines man Rico Conning added extra attack to DM's *Black Celebration* fanfare for a limited-edition 12-inch. Though it would be hard to improve on this paranoid juggernaut – about, as per many DM songs, corruption of innocence. Fact: the moaning female voice was sampled from The Chanters' 1955 banger, She Wants To Mambo.

(6:50). Written by Martin L. Gore. Published by Grabbing Hands Music Ltd./EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS). ℗1986 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From *Black Celebration* (1986)

4 Never Let Me Down Again
(Tsangarides Mix)

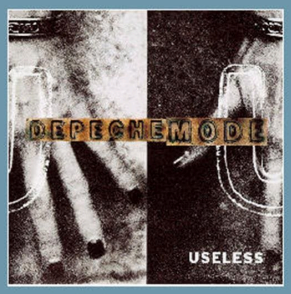
Another great mix of another key Depeche Mode single, from a limited 12-inch released in August '87. Heavy metal producer Chris Tsangarides brings acoustic depth to a song that was already heading somewhere more rock. Fittingly for a track bedded in samples, its guitar intro resurfaced on 3rd Bass's Wordz Of Wisdom Pt 2.

(4:22). Written by Martin L. Gore. Published by Grabbing Hands Music Ltd./EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS). ℗1987 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive license to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From *Music For The Masses* (1987)

9 Barrel Of A Gun
(Underworld Hard Mix)

Depeche Mode had always interacted with the dance scene, and in the '90s, as CD singles proliferated, there were more opportunities for the remixers *du jour*. Here, Underworld dispense with much of the *Ultra* song's heavy, murky trip-hop, substituting heavy, murky acid-techno, while skeins of Gahan's vocal descend. Barrel's theme – what price, free will? – is well served by the unbending rhythm.

(9:36). Written by Martin L. Gore. Published by Grabbing Hands Music Ltd./EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS). ℗1997 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From *Ultra* (1997)



10 Useless
(Remix)

The October '97 single version of the *Ultra* track: a tad shorter, drums a tad drier, more gloriously noisy at the end, but a reminder of the quality of the songs on Depeche Mode's car crash album, made as Dave Gahan tumbled to his heroin-fuelled nadir. Despite DM's synth MO, a guitar is never far from Gore's hands, and this is one of his gnarliest riffs.

(4:51). Written by Martin L. Gore. Published by Grabbing Hands Music Ltd./EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS). ℗1997 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From *Ultra* (1997)

11 When The Body Speaks
(Acoustic Version)

2001's *Exciter* is not many fans' favourite DM album (it's certainly not Dave Gahan's), but When The Body Speaks is a highlight, and in this guise – originally included with February 2002's Goodnight Lovers single – its charms are at their most pronounced. Live strings, clean guitar and Gahan with a quiet and tender vocal with few analogues in his DM portfolio.

(6:00). Written by Martin L. Gore. Published by Grabbing Hands Music Ltd./EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS). ℗2001 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From *Exciter* (2001)

12 Suffer Well
(Tiga Remix)

Early-2000s electroclash acts namechecked Depeche Mode willy-nilly, and Tiga returns this 2005 *Playing The Angel* single reverently to the mid-'80s, leaving its grimy guitar riff behind. Gahan, whose lyric this is, looks back on the pain he caused himself and others during his '90s drug ride and wonders if, by hanging on, he's actually come through.

(6:28). Written by Dave Gahan, Christian Eigner, Andrew Phillpott. Published by EMI Blackwood Music Inc. o/b/o/JJSR Productions Inc. (BMI). ℗ 2006 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From Suffer Well (Club Promo) (2006)

WHEN MOJO ASKED DEPECHE MODE IF THEY WOULD COLLABORATE on a covermount CD, both parties were keen to showcase the creative breadth and 40-year compass of the band.

As a guiding light we had *The 12" Singles* box sets: Mute/Columbia Records' recent vinyl reboots of all the DM 45s and extra tracks up to 2005-6, repositories of a wealth of outtakes, fascinating alt-versions and remixes of every hue. Plus the profusion of songs included within, and associated with, their most recent albums: 2009's *Sounds Of The Universe*, 2013's *Delta Machine* and 2017's *Spirit*.

The final selection roved far and wide, from the band's original, hugely influential electro-pop beginnings, via their arena/stadium-filling synth-rock maturity, to their current state of restless readjustment within a zone that's indubitably Depeche Mode.

As a March release for a fifteenth album, *Memento Mori*, looms, and a new sonic chapter opens, our celebration is also tinged with sadness – since the loss of founding member Andy Fletcher, who died last May, is still keenly felt. In his interview for our cover story Depeche Mode singer Dave Gahan reflected that, "Fletch has always been there. And Fletch was the biggest fan of Depeche Mode."

If he'd been around, Fletcher would have had strong views on the Depeche songs that best deserved the description *Classics. Rarities. Revelations*. We like to think he'd have approved of our choice.

5 Enjoy The Silence (Harmonium)

Proof of the songcraft beneath the technoid surfaces of much Depeche music, this takes us back to Enjoy The Silence's balladic origins – before Alan Wilder and producer Flood counselled cranking the tempo. Martin Gore sings on this – basically his demo with pump organ wheeze amping up the crushing melancholy. Originally released on a limited 12-inch single, February 1990.

(2:43). Written by Martin L. Gore. Published by Grabbing Hands Music Ltd./EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS). ℗1990 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From *Violator* (1990)

6 Sea Of Sin (Sensoria)

Martin Gore often says people miss the humour in Depeche Mode – maybe his humour is not as others'? – but this *Violator* offcut, premiered on the World In My Eyes 12-inch in September 1990, adds a knowing wink to its perky chatter and probing bass. "It gets better and better/As it gets wetter and wetter" indeed!

(6:06). Written by Martin L. Gore. Published by Grabbing Hands Music Ltd./EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS). ℗1990 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From World In My Eyes/Happiest Girl/Sea Of Sin (1990)

7 I Feel You (Seven Inch Mix)

A rare Route 1 choice on this A-Z of roads less travelled, I Feel You's 7-inch versh arrived in February 1993 as a taster for the upcoming *Songs Of Faith And Devotion* album. Thrusting, relentless, Gore judged it "the closest we're going to come to sounding like a real authentic rock band." Gahan sings it like he's shouting from a mountain top, about drugs.

(4:34). Written by Martin L. Gore. Published by Grabbing Hands Music Ltd./EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS). ℗1993 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From I Feel You (7-inch) (1993)

8 Condemnation (Paris Mix)

Shorn of the boom-smack of the version on *SOFAD*, this mix, released as a single in September '93, feels even more of a diversion for Depeche – pure gospel piano, real gospel choir and *echt* acoustic ambience. For Gahan, it was important – exactly what he wanted to do more of in the band – and he gives it his all, his voice close to breaking.

(3:21). Written by Martin L. Gore. Published by Grabbing Hands Music Ltd./EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS). ℗1993 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From *Songs Of Faith And Devotion* (1993)

13 Come Back

A chiming, emotional highlight of 2009's *Sounds Of The Universe* album and another Dave Gahan song (with a little help from his friends). Epically large, with banks of electroid choirs reaching for the celestial, and forging on at a stately tempo that suits Gahan's portrayal of a man in limbo, locked in bad thinking, awaiting an emancipation that never materialises.

(5:15). Written by Dave Gahan, Christian Eigner, Andrew Phillpott. Published by EMI Blackwood Music Inc. o/b/o/JJSR Productions Inc. (BMI). ℗2009 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Sony Music Entertainment (UK). From *Sounds Of The Universe* (2009)

14 Should Be Higher (Jim Sclavunos from Grinderman Remix)

Bad Seed Sclavunos adds sonic nastiness to a sober man's nostalgia for the altered states to which he once aspired. Again the lyric is, naturally, Gahan's, and his bravura performance has real theatre, as if he's updating a twisted Weimar cabaret tune.

(4:11). Written by Dave Gahan, Kurt Uenala. Published by: EMI Blackwood Music Inc. o/b/o/ JJSR Productions Inc. (BMI)/Chocolate Robot, admin. by Kobalt Songs Music Publishing (ASCAP). ℗2013 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Columbia Records, a division of Sony Music Entertainment. From Should Be Higher (Remixes) – EP (2013)

15 Going Backwards (Highline Sessions Version)

A wilder, woollier, more intense version of the opening track of 2017's *Spirit*, with bass boost by US techno tweaker Matrixxman, recorded live on film at Highline Stages in Manhattan, August 2016 (you can watch it on YouTube). Gore's song deplores a state where humans can take out humans in drone strikes as if playing Call Of Duty. Gahan takes it to church.

(5:27). Martin L. Gore. Published by Grabbing Hands Music Ltd./EMI Music Publishing Ltd. (PRS). ℗2017 Venusnote Limited, under exclusive licence to Columbia Records, a division of Sony Music Entertainment. From Going Backwards (2017)

"WHAT'S DEPECHE MODE? WE'RE STILL TRYING TO FIGURE IT OUT. BUT IT'S COME MUCH FURTHER THAN THIS KID FROM ESSEX EVER IMAGINED."
Dave Gahan, p68

RECONSTRUCTIO

The loss of Andy Fletcher in June 2022 robbed DEPECHE MODE of their Mr Dependable and posed big questions about their future. How would their often-rocky relationship work without him? And could it survive the intervention of another, wholly unexpected third wheel? With a fascinating 15th album poised to emerge, they tell DANNY ECCLESTON, "We had to *really* decide, do we carry on?"

Portraits: ANTON CORBIJN.

N TIME AGAIN

And then there were two: Depeche Mode's Martin Gore and Dave Gahan, New York City, 2022.

Anton Corbijn

IN A QUIET ROOM AT THE Stalls level of Berlin's Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, MOJO and Martin Gore are ensconced. We have escaped, briefly, from the hubbub of the auditorium, where journalists and camera crews from across Europe and beyond mill and chatter, gathered in this gilt and velvet relic of the 1890s to hear what, in Berlin especially, is big news: a new Depeche Mode album, their 15th, followed by a Depeche Mode tour – 45 arena and stadium dates globally, March to August – their first for five years. But the trumpeting is laced with muted notes, since *Memento Mori* – as the new album is called – comes soon after the passing of a much-loved mainstay of the band.

"I was in our hotel earlier," Gore tells MOJO, with a glance at the window, "a hotel we've stayed at many times. And I looked over to the bar where normally I'd see Fletch and…" he pauses. "And he's not there."

Gore describes the death of Andy Fletcher, fellow founder member of Depeche Mode and his friend since he was 11, as "the biggest shock of my life". Fletcher died suddenly of an aortic dissection at his London home on May 26, shortly before he was due to join Gore and singer Dave Gahan in Santa Barbara, California to begin work on the latest batch of Depeche Mode songs. After they'd picked each other up off the floor, the bereaved pair had a decision to make. "We kind of had to… to *really* decide, are we going to finish?" says Gore. "Or do we carry on?"

Fletcher was the barely-changing rock in a band whose dizzying rise, restless musical shape-shifting and notoriously intense rapport with their devoted fanbase, over 40-plus years, tested the sanity of them all. And while it's broadly acknowledged that his musical input in Depeche Mode was not, in recent years, immense, his role in preserving the group's fragile equilibrium remained crucial. In the most testing times – the group's transformation, pivoting ➤

Boys say go: Depeche Mode Mk 1 (from left) Martin Gore, Vince Clarke, Andy Fletcher and (front) Dave Gahan, in the garden at Blackwing Studios, London, June 17, 1981.

Master and servants: making *Some Great Reward* at Hansa Mischraum, Berlin, 1984 (from left) Alan Wilder, Fletcher, Gore, Gahan and producer Daniel Miller.

Getty (2)

➤ on 1990's *Violator*, from an arena-level electro-pop unit into a global stadium rock band – Fletcher was not without his own wobbles; he bailed out on 1993's Devotional tour early, citing nervous exhaustion. But with his bandmates increasingly unmoored – Gore dependent on alcohol; Gahan with a taste for something harder – he was the one who held the centre as things fell apart.

Depeche Mode's progress in the 21st century – records-wise, a sustained return to the electronic source that birthed them – has been smoother, but not as smooth as it looked. Since the bottoming-out of Gahan's heroin addiction and his return, quite literally, to life in the late '90s, the singer has a new habit – of challenging what he considers the band's status quo, lobbying for a bigger role in the songwriting and shots-calling. After Fletcher's June 20 funeral, it was a theme to which he returned.

"Dave was very open with me, before we started the recording sessions," says Gore. "He said he'd been talking to his therapist about how we were going to be. What our new relationship would be like."

Depeche Mode were now a duo. But how, exactly, was that going to work?

IN A ROOM IN DOWNTOWN MANHATTAN'S FOUR Seasons Hotel, a very dapper Dave Gahan picks lint off his slacks, his handsomely manicured hands clanking with rock'n'roll rings. On his feet: a pair of lipstick-red winklepickers that could take your eyes out.

A loud and engagingly performative speaker in a *sui generis* mix of Estuarine English and a dash of American, his voice softens when recalling the immediate aftermath of Fletcher's death.

"I rang Mart," he says. "We were both upset. My first thought was, I wish I'd been kinder…"

Kinder?

"Yeah. There are things that I wish I'd let Fletch know. Like, Hey, I know you don't play anything, but fuck, I'm so glad you're here. I don't know what the fuck you *do*, but it's *something*. And maybe it's really, really important."

Fletcher and Gore met at school in Basildon, and after school at the Essex town's Youth Fellowship, a Christian organisation with a strong music programme. In 1980 Fletcher and Vince Clarke – a connection through another Christian group, Boys' Brigade – formed a band called Composition Of Sound, to which they annexed Gore on guitar and keyboards and then Gahan as singer after Clarke heard the apprentice delinquent singing David Bowie's "Heroes" at a local youth club. Moving to an all-synthesizer line-up to harmonise with the electronic pop sounds that were inspiring them – Gary Numan, Human League, OMD – they became Depeche Mode in September 1980, playing shows that impressed key names on the 'Futurist' music scene, including Daniel Miller, mastermind of The Normal and Silicon Teens and boss of the nascent Mute label, who signed them.

"They were kids," said Miller, "and kids weren't doing electronic music at that time. It was people who'd been to art school mainly, but Depeche weren't processed by that aesthetic at all. They were doing pop music on synthesizers. And it worked incredibly well."

From the beginning, the 6'2", ginger-haired Fletcher tended to find himself near the back of band photographs and, even after Clarke's shock exit in 1981 and Gore's acceptance of the songwriter's mantle, he seemed happy to occupy a more strategic or liaison role. Gore steered Depeche Mode in a direction both darker and harder, embracing industrial influences and brand-new sampling technology on 1983's *Construction Time Again* and 1984's *Some Great Reward*, subverting the charts with singles that were oddly gnarly, deeply melancholy, or both, while Fletcher held a torch for what he called the band's "popability". Beyond that, he was hands-off.

"I don't find it very stimulating making music," Fletcher told Musician's Jon Pareles in 1993. "I'm a useless musician." But he was happy to admit to a fascination with the business. "With the band, I still find the whole job challenging and rewarding, the fact of creating something and releasing it, the marketing, the promotion side of things…"

Gore says that at occasions such as the Berlin press conference, Fletcher would have been the one "in his element": remembering names, cementing relationships, having a beer.

"We always used to say that Andy was The Man Of The People," says Gore. "He represented the average person more than maybe me and Dave. If we were to start going up our arses he'd spot it a mile away."

GAHAN REFERS TO FLETCHER AS "THE CAPTAIN OF the ship". James Ford, the producer of *Memento Mori* and Depeche Mode's previous album, 2017's *Spirit*, calls him "the rudder". Miller describes him as the "positive pessimist" who kept the others grounded, especially early on.

"It's still not quite real that he's gone," says Gahan. "You work with somebody like this for over 40 years. You know everything about each other. And nothing really. It's a weird, weird relationship, people in bands…"

Gahan says he soon realised that it was Gore who would be most in need of support ("I felt a sort of protectiveness"). And also that

Mass appeal: (from left) Fletcher, Gore, Wilder, and Gahan enjoy the silence, The Worx Studios, London, January 1990.

Kevin Westenberg

Gore's loss of Fletcher would require Gore and Gahan to look at their own relationship – a relationship that had not always benefited from Fletcher's well-meaning intercessions.

"Martin had lost his champion – someone who would always fight for Martin," says Gahan. "If there was ever a disagreement over a song or a part, Fletch would sit me down and it would be, 'Fing is, Dave… Martin and I have been talking and…' I mean, that got really old. Why won't Martin tell me himself? And that's where we kind of got to on the last record." ➢

"THERE ARE THINGS THAT I WISH I'D LET FLETCH KNOW. LIKE, HEY, I KNOW YOU DON'T PLAY ANYTHING, BUT FUCK, I'M SO GLAD YOU'RE HERE."
Dave Gahan

A QUESTION OF TIME

Depeche Mode in albums. Consistency is their middle name, decides DANNY ECCLESTON.

SPEAK AND SPELL

★★★★

(Mute, 1981)

Often presumed to be Depeche Mode's super-pop record, their (mostly) Vince Clarke-penned debut has enough cutting-edge analogue synth action and weird darkness to give depth and – so it has proven – longevity. Photographic hinted broodingly at voyeurism; Gore's instrumental Big Muff would not sound outgunned on any early-'80s electronica mixtape.

A BROKEN FRAME

★★★

(Mute, 1982)

No-one is quite sure why Vince Clarke left DM – not even Clarke – but Gore thinks their rejection of one or more of his second batch of songs was part of it. Gore's efforts to step into the breach, however, were mixed. See You is DM's wimpiest single, but Leave In Silence introduces the semi-Slavic gloom that would soon be serving DM so well.

CONSTRUCTION TIME AGAIN

★★★★

(Mute, 1983)

Ex-Korgi Alan Wilder joins, adding rhythmic nous, harmonic sophistication – even jazzy piano bits – and the excellent Two Minute Warning. Faustian capitalism, eco-catastrophe… the topics are a full house of mid-'80s paranoia. Industrial scraping and clanging (notably, on the Gore-sung Pipeline), and the echo of the big room at Bowie's Hansa in Berlin all help.

SOME GREAT REWARD

★★★★

(Mute, 1984)

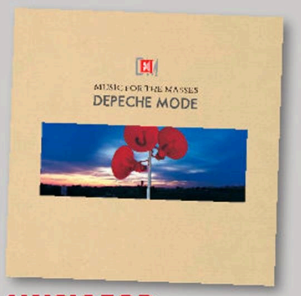
It's *Construction Time Again*, again, but with more clanging (Something To Do is quasi-Foetus) and more transgressive themes. Master And Servant equates economics with S&M, Something To Do doesn't bother with the equating ("I'll put your leather boots on") and the limpid Blasphemous Rumours inhabits the mind of a suicidal teen. Meanwhile, Gahan's voice, edging deeper and richer on *CTA*, is coming into its own.

BLACK CELEBRATION

★★★★

(Mute, 1986)

Bad vibes in the studio as co-producer Daniel Miller drove everyone barmy ("I was very influenced by Werner Herzog"). Yet post-industrial Depeche yields a richer, velvety soundworld, insinuating melodies and Gahan now positively Stentorian. "Death is everywhere," he wails in Fly On The Windscreen, with typical defiance of pop's feelgood fancies. Big in Germany.



MUSIC FOR THE MASSES

★★★★★

(Mute, 1987)

A case of life-imitating-album-title as DM score their first Top 40 showing in the US LPs chart. Helmed by Tears For Fears producer Dave Bascombe, there's more focus, starker riffs, a bigger canvas, and plenty of songs that would have worked in any sonic context. Subsequent gig staple Never Let Me Down Again sounds like a drug song, but all that was to come. Their first rock'n'roll album, in a way.

VIOLATOR

★★★★★

(Mute 1990)

With their image-making now courtesy Anton Corbijn, DM merge European and US paradigms much as U2 had done in the mid-'80s. Brutish blues twang Personal Jesus plays taboo, though the lyric skirts blasphemy. New Order-y Enjoy The Silence is surely, still, their greatest song, while Halo, Waiting For The Night and the Floyd-inspired Clean attest to life beyond the singles.

SONGS OF FAITH AND DEVOTION

★★★★

(Mute, 1993)

With recording bogged down by Gahan's clandestine drug use and Wilder's creative alienation, this should have been rotten, but DM's momentum kept rolling. Rockier textures and distorted guitars on I Feel You and Mercy In You matched Gahan's rockier hair-beard-tattoo combo. Uilleann pipes on Judas denote a decoupling from the synth, as does Gahan's grainy, compelling gospel turn on Condemnation.

ULTRA

★★★★

(Mute, 1997)

Another victory wrenched from the jaws of defeat – the album DM looked least likely to finish, especially after Wilder's exit and Gahan's May '96 OD. With Tim Simenon replacing Flood as producer, dirty, gothic trip-hop prevails. Barrel Of A Gun seethes. Home is Gore's career peak vocal performance (and guitar solo). Guests include Tackhead, BJ Cole and Can's Jaki Liebezeit.

EXCITER

★★

(Mute, 2001)

Gore claims some DM albums are ironically titled, but only *Exciter* sounds like it really is. The Body Speaks is poignant; the rest feels superficially 'clubby' (I Feel Loved) or laid-back to the point of somnolence (producer Mark Bell was confused by Gore's back seat in the studio and requests for days off). "It's like a band copying Depeche Mode," Gahan later said.

PLAYING THE ANGEL

★★★★

(Mute, 2005)

The arrival of David Gahan: Songwriter, initially somewhat to Gore's discomfort, heralded a return to vitality. Pungent retro synth sounds purge *Exciter*'s mood of meh. John The Revelator plays the Personal Jesus card. Gahan accesses his recovery to lend conviction to a strong batch of Gore songs (Precious has the bittersweet glide of an Enjoy The Silence). Elbow/Blur producer Ben Hiller referees. Big in Germany.

SOUNDS OF THE UNIVERSE

★★★★

(Mute, 2009)

Opener In Chains says everything about the singer Dave Gahan has become since his recovery – the flex, and dynamics and (let's say it) soul. The rest presents as a smoother, more elegant sibling to *Playing The Angel*, reaching higher, on Gore's Peace and Gahan/Eigner/Philpott's powerfully yearning Come Back, to go places Depeche Mode songs generally don't: an ecstatic plane.

DELTA MACHINE

★★★

(Mute, 2013)

Mark Ellis, aka Flood, returned to mix his first album since *SOFAD*, and classic Depeche murk comes, er, flooding back. Welcome To My World and Angel are squelchy electro-blues. Heaven scales piano-led peaks. Gahan teams with Swiss New Yorker Kurt Uenala to pen the excellent Should Be Higher. Nothing wrong with any of it, but no sense of DM reaching beyond their fanbase.

SPIRIT

★★★

(Mute, 2017)

Gore/Depeche's regimen since *SOFAD* has meant an album every four years whether inspiration has struck or not. *Spirit* at least had a new idea (for DM): politics, with the climate, the US right and tech dystopia all essayed. But it's more like a series of angry Facebook posts than an album of music, even by Depeche Mode's gloomy and dissatisfied standards. Time for a change of tack…

Back from the dead: the *Ultra*-era Mode, *sans* Wilder but miraculously still with Gahan, in December 1996.

Stefan De Batselier/Avalon.red, Getty (2)

"THERE ARE STILL PEOPLE WHO, IF YOU SAY, OH, I PLAY IN DEPECHE MODE, THEY'D BE LIKE, 'WHAT? THAT BAND FROM THE '80s?'"
Martin Gore

➢ Sessions for *Spirit*, says Gahan, were marred by tensions of this sort. To the extent that James Ford, on his first job for the band, was forced to draw a line.

"In the end James was kind of, 'I've had enough of this! I want everyone out of studio. I just want Martin and Dave to sit in here and we're going to talk about this.' Fletch *did not* like that. He literally had to get manhandled out of the studio by our manager. I mean, kicking and screaming. 'I'm in the band! Why aren't I in this conversation?'"

So Gahan and Gore had it out, minus Fletcher, and in the process realised their issues were more wide-ranging than they'd thought.

"We had these unspoken things. Martin was like, 'Well, you get *this* and you can walk on stage and everybody goes nuts. And *I* write the songs.'"

Gahan – who has contributed songs since 2005's *Playing The Angel* – took up the gauntlet.

"How many songs can I have then?"

"Well if there's 12 you can have four at the most."

"Fine! Now I know, right? So I won't bother writing 10!"

It seems a bitter irony that despite all his years devoted to keeping Depeche Mode together, a by-product of Andy Fletcher's passing might be better relations between Martin Gore and Dave Gahan.

"I think Fletch's presence forced Martin and I to… maybe this is the wrong word, but *compete*," reflects Gahan. "And it created a certain atmosphere of being a bit *spiky*. So Martin and I have had to find a different way. We had to find a way of communicating, becoming friends."

Becoming friends, after 40-odd years in a band together? Gahan smiles.

"Sounds weird, I know."

GORE HAD THE TITLE *MEMENTO MORI* LONG before Fletcher's death gave it extra weight. He notes the origins of the phrase in Roman times, when parading generals, celebrating their victories, were followed by a slave whispering the words, which translate as "Remember You Must Die". Rather than a caricature of Depeche Mode gloom-mongering, Gore sees in the words an invitation to humility, or to cherish the time we have. "There's no need to see it as depressing," he says. "It's more an 'enjoy life' kind of thing."

The thoughts are reflected in a record that feels more open than any Depeche Mode have made in a while, perhaps since 1997's *Ultra*. Its melodies are persuasive, its soundworld rich and elegant. It looks inward, as all the best Depeche Mode music does, eschewing the political preoccupations of the didactic *Spirit* ("a little too literal," reckons Gahan) but the balance between celestial synth motifs and agonised soul-searching – exemplified by lead-off track Ghosts Again – is close to ideal. Hardcore fans and more casual admirers alike will be pleasantly surprised, but not as surprised as Gahan was when Gore sent him the demos, because there was something unusual about them.

"Martin FaceTimed me," says Gahan, "and said, 'I have to warn you. On a couple of the songs, it's Richard Butler singing…'"

Gore had been friends with Butler, the gravel-voiced Psychedelic Furs frontman, for years when pandemic hit. "He just reached out to me and said, 'We should write some songs,'" recalls Gore. "I think he might have said that once before, but it never kind of went anywhere. This time I texted him back: 'Got any ideas?'"

Butler had some ideas, and the pair batted them back and forth. "The first song we wrote, we ended up throwing away," says Gore. "But the standard just kept getting better. Sometimes I would write a line and he would write a line. Or he would write a verse melody and I would write a middle eight. There were all kinds of approaches."

Gahan was taken aback. "It was such a big leap for Martin to write with somebody else," he says. "He was taking a risk, because he's so particular about things. He likes everything in its place and as he likes it." But Gahan was also daunted – the demos set unusual challenges, especially the keynote Ghosts Again.

"When I first heard that demo, it made me feel immediately full of joy (*laughs*) – an odd feeling for me. But I had to get past hearing Richard singing. Because he's got a really distinctive tone and style. But there was something about his melody and his intonation that I warmed to. And some of the lyrics leant heavily into Richard's repertoire of imagery. Yeah, let's put it that way. Which I really identified with."

The Gore-Butler co-writes are some of Depeche Mode's strongest songs, and Gahan's strongest performances, in years. The stately and lyrical Don't Say You Love Me, for instance, is a singer's showcase in the Scott Walker lineage…

"It's *so* Scott Walker!" enthuses Gahan. "It was a weird coincidence because I'd been listening to a lot of Scott – songs like Sundown and A Woman Left Lonely, those torch-like melodies…"

Gahan himself, along with regular songwriting partners including touring DM members Christian Eigner and Peter Gordeno, contributes two songs, plus a co-write with Gore entitled Wagging Tongue – their first to make it onto a Depeche Mode album. Gahan attacks it as if he's angry at someone, but who?

"I'm not sure," says Gahan. "I am ranting at *somebody*. There was a part of it that came to me literally just after I got the news that Mark Lanegan had passed away. Rich [Machin of Soulsavers] rang me and said, 'Lanegan's gone, mate.'"

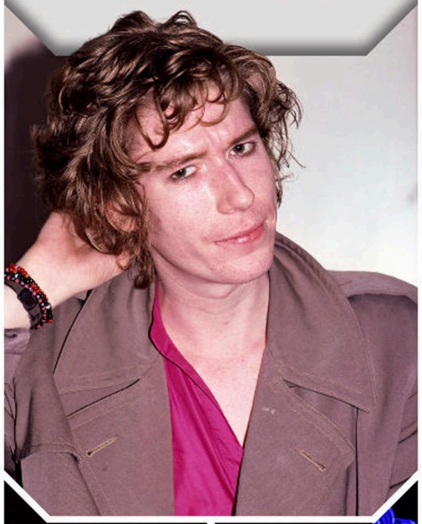
Gahan had got to know the ex-Screaming Trees singer through Soulsavers, for whom they both starred as guest vocalists – although the pair had admired each other's work for years. The Depeche man was, he says, "surprised but not shocked" when Lanegan, who had survived multiple addictions and rolls of the lifestyle dice, gave up the ghost in February 2022. ➢

"We saw him as some freak of nature…" Gahan shakes his head. "Look, what got him in the end, who knows, but he had a terrible bout of Covid, had a terrible fall. And he spent a good few couple of months in a hospital in Ireland. Anyway, there was a part of this song that came out of that." Gahan pauses. "Storyteller – Mark was a great storyteller. Just with his voice. I didn't even have to follow him lyrically sometimes. I knew through his tone where he was."

Another of Gahan's songs closes the album. Speak To Me flames out in an epic swirl of sound – both Gore and producer James Ford credit engineer Marta Salogni for the ethereal analogue tape treatments that grace this and other songs ("think Frippertronics," they both say). The lyric finds its narrator in a lonely place, reaching out in desperation. Is it an addiction song?

"That's definitely in there. Because it's built into me now," says Gahan. "The power of that feeling of disappearing with a drug. And the power of asking for help. But also, there's a part in there where I was, in part, talking to Martin. I want to have something between us that we haven't had up to this point. I don't know what that is. And it's kind of a bit terrifying. Because what if it doesn't work?"

"RICHARD [BUTLER] REACHED OUT TO ME AND SAID, 'WE SHOULD WRITE SOME SONGS. THIS TIME I TEXTED HIM BACK: 'GOT ANY IDEAS?'"
Martin Gore



Anton Corbijn, Getty (3)

THERE IS NOTHING CLEARLY unfriendly, or obviously distant about Martin Gore. He's tanned and smiley, boyish at 61, and quick with a gurgling laugh. That said, he is not desperate to fill the air with his talk, and you can imagine how he and Gahan, with the singer's therapised eagerness to explore his feelings and those of others, might be on different wavelengths. In a way, the closer bond between the taboo-flouting Gore – whose get-up of leather straps and kinky boots raised eyebrows in the mid '80s – and strait-laced Fletcher seems odder. Illustrating their differences, Gore remembers a trick he played on his friend some time in the mid '80s.

"I can't remember which album it was, but we told Fletch that we were going to call it *Perversions*," chuckles Gore. "We knew that he would freak out. We kept that going for a day or so before we finally told him we were only joking. I think his quote was, 'What's my mum gonna say?'"

What Mrs Fletcher made of Martin Gore's lyrical intimations of S&M – a dynamic that informed jaundiced takes on politics, economics, religion and sexuality, a burgeoning outsider sensibility that seemed to grow counterintuitively more intense as Depeche Mode became exponentially bigger – is unrecorded. But you could guess.

"When Martin first played me Blasphemous Rumours I was quite offended," Fletcher told Number 1 magazine's Max Bell in 1985 of the DM single that declared that "God's got a sick sense of humour". Today, Gore claims never to have shared an iota of the faith of "bible-bashing" Fletcher and Vince Clarke – the latter even had a pre-synth Christian folk duo called Nathan – though he tolerated Boys' Brigade and Youth Fellowship.

"Watching it as an outsider, it was very interesting," he says. "I think there are so many people in the world who are searching, you know? I think that's one of the reasons we've been so popular. Maybe we're here to help people to ask those questions without giving answers."

Around 1983's *Construction Time Again* – the first full flowering of the post-Clarke era of Depeche Mode – a change seemed to come over Gore. He'd swopped a devoutly Christian girlfriend ("Anything was 'perverted'," he told writer Stephen Dalton. "If I watched something on TV and there was somebody naked, I was a pervert") for a German one. They moved to a student apartment in Charlottenburg, Berlin, and his time in the city was key in overturning what he described as a typically English suburban mindset.

"[Producer] Gareth Jones had a big influence on me," says Gore today. "He was a vegetarian, and that was something I was thinking about at the time. I saw what he was eating, and I tried it and I became a vegetarian back in 1983. Then, when we made *Construction Time Again*, he was the one who first suggested that we record it at Hansa."

Berlin, says Gahan, felt "unique and strange" – inspirational.

"It was an artists' enclave. You could get out of military service if you moved there. So I suppose I did soak up the artistic… vibes. Daniel Miller already knew people there. Blixa Bargeld from Einstürzende Neubauten would come and sit in the studio – maybe to wait for Daniel. We thought that was a bit odd at the time."

The popular image of Depeche Mode – dark, moody, a bit pervy – was minted around then. Does he ever feel a bit lumbered with it?

"I suppose, if you're talking about Europe, we are kind of like a cult," says Gore. "Which is ironic as we've just been talking about religion. Maybe we're filling that hole. But we're very different from the persona that's put out of the band. [Photographer] Anton [Corbijn] is very involved in our image – and that stuff is always super cool. But that's not necessarily us, to put it lightly."

Is this Depeche Mode's way of mitigating another idea of them: as the primped popsters of I Just Can't Get Enough? A kind of Rock Establishment view?

"I suppose every part of the world is different," says Gore. "I think in Europe we're very highly esteemed. And yeah, maybe even thought of a little too much like gods. America is very different. We have some respect. But there are still people who, if you get talking and you say, Oh, I play in Depeche Mode, they'd be like, 'What? That band from the '80s?'"

In 2020 Depeche Mode were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. But it was during the pandemic and they were inducted online, via Zoom. Disappointed?

"I think I was actually quite pleased that we didn't have to go to Cleveland," Gore grins. "Maybe that's the end of that sentence."

EVEN BEFORE FLETCHER'S PASSING, DAVE GAHAN wondered if he could face making another Depeche Mode album. He'd spent lockdown cocooned in Montauk, on the tip of Long Island, and like many, he had struggled to fully emerge.

"I went for breakfast with one of my mates, Craig. And I said, 'Martin's talking about doing another record and I don't know what

to do.' Craig's like, 'Can't you just make the record?' No, it doesn't work like that with this lot. There's a military operation going on in the background – the tour, everything. It becomes a massive cult ceremony that you're a part of. I didn't know if I wanted to take on this monster again."

It wasn't the first time Gahan had envisaged an end to Depeche Mode. Already enmeshed in hard drugs and favouring a more rock'n'roll direction to go with his lifestyle, he was loath to regroup for 1993's *Songs Of Faith And Devotion* until he heard the demo for the gospelly Condemnation. Then, after 2001's lacklustre *Exciter* and the contrasting freedom and empowerment he felt making his 2003 solo debut, *Paper Monsters*, he sought a number of assurances before agreeing to come back on board for 2005's *Playing The Angel*.

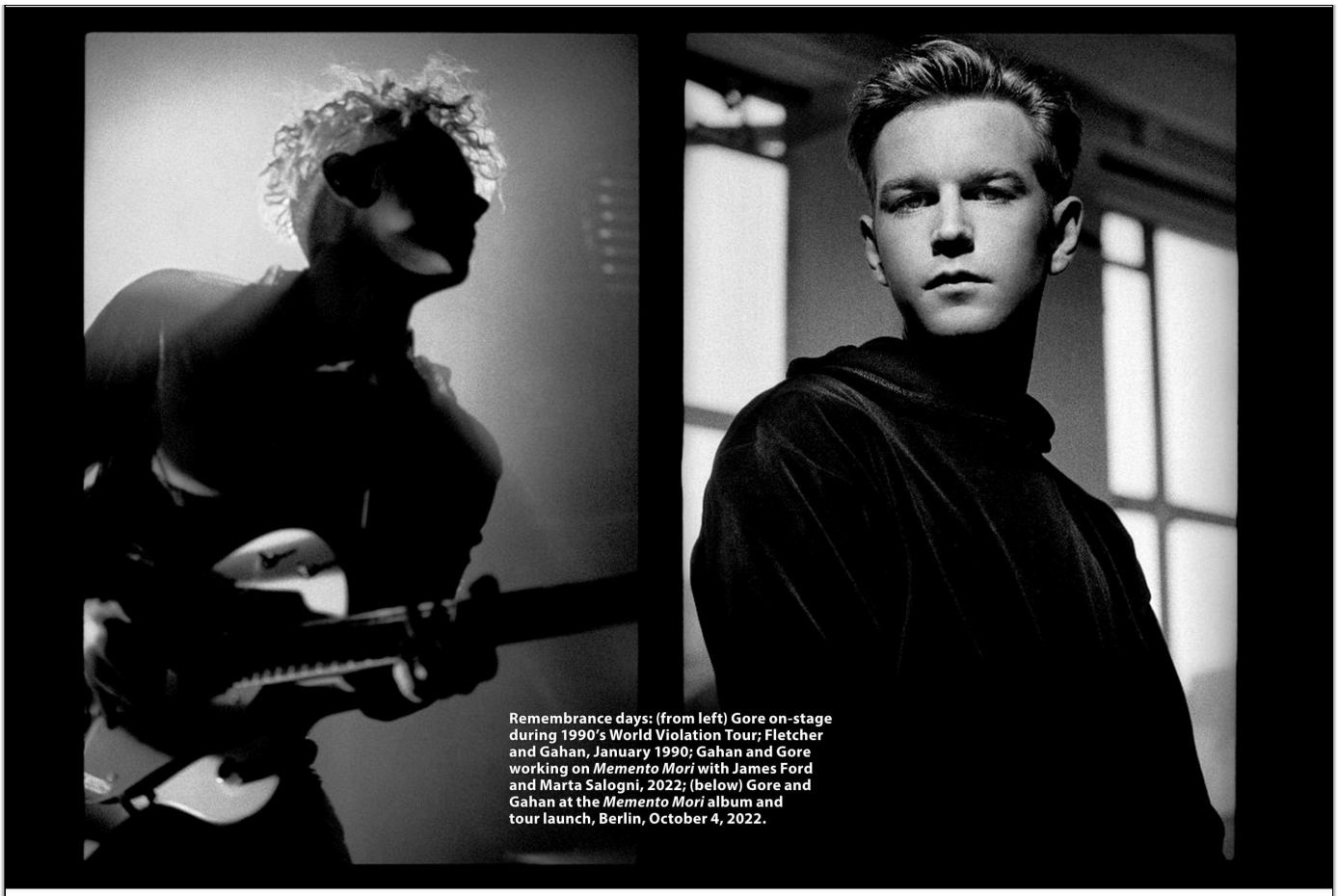
This time, he concedes, his return to the fold was spurred by some unfinished business. There was the making of *Spirit* to expunge. And the ongoing quest, in spite of Depeche Mode's vast success, to prove themselves.

"You know, we have always felt ourselves, I think, the indie band, the underdog," says Gahan. "We don't see ourselves with some of the more successful bands. We've always been the odd one out, the weird kid in the corner at the party who doesn't quite know how to talk to girls… unless he has six pints, then it all goes wrong."

Gahan laughs. "I've been married three times. So I'm still working on that. Hopefully this one's OK! No, she's great. Puts up with a lot…"

Gahan has been married to Jennifer Sklias Gahan since ➢

Essex appeal: Gore and Gahan team up in Los Angeles, 2022; (opposite page, top) new Depeche collaborator Richard Butler; (below, from left) Gahan inspirations Scott Walker and Mark Lanegan.



Remembrance days: (from left) Gore on-stage during 1990's World Violation Tour; Fletcher and Gahan, January 1990; Gahan and Gore working on *Memento Mori* with James Ford and Marta Salogni, 2022; (below) Gore and Gahan at the *Memento Mori* album and tour launch, Berlin, October 4, 2022.

◄ 1999. Their daughter Stella Rose is also a singer – Gahan excitedly shows MOJO her current single, a roiling, P.J. Harvey-meets-The-Birthday-Party thing in a handcrafted cassette box. They are New York-based. Gore lives on the opposite coast, in Santa Barbara (in January, a couple of months after MOJO's interview, he was among the evacuees when the California coast experienced devastating floods), divorced but close with his children. Both are teetotal and have been for years. Fletcher, by contrast, liked a beer and a cigarette – Gahan and Gore and James Ford all mourn the empty stool they expect to see at various hotel bars around the world. If he'd followed the abstemious path blazed by Gahan and Gore, might he still be around?

"I don't know, who knows?" says Gore. "But he wasn't like a wild drinker. For the last 10 years or so he would go to the pub very early. It used to be 6.30. And then it gradually crept forward to 5.30. But he was home, usually, by 7.30, 8. So he'd have had a couple of pints but it wasn't like he was burning the candle at both ends. He had a heart attack. And you know, his dad had a heart attack, so it could be a genetic thing."

Gore shakes his head.

"I've been around all these kinds of questions in my head, but I came to the conclusion that it's pointless to keep thinking about it. It's not going to bring him back."

One of Martin Gore's biggest regrets is that Fletcher was not around for the making of *Memento Mori* or to enjoy the results.

"He was really looking forward to starting," he says. "That was what made me very upset, apart from the fact that my best friend had died – that we were all about to get going again. It seemed so unfair."

"WE HAD THESE UNSPOKEN THINGS. MARTIN WAS LIKE, 'WELL, YOU GET *THIS* AND YOU CAN WALK ON-STAGE AND EVERYBODY GOES NUTS. AND *I* WRITE THE SONGS.'"
Dave Gahan

JAMES FORD, WHO BUILT HIS REPUTATION WITH the electronic popscapes of Simian Mobile Disco before his production skills came to the attention of bands including Gorillaz, Florence + The Machine and the Arctic Monkeys, is quick to acknowledge the stature of his employers in the pantheon of modern music.

"They've always made music from the future," says Ford. "They're in that pioneering lineage, of the Raymond Scotts and the Delia Derbyshires. And they still have that attitude of, 'We're going to make something nobody's ever heard before.'"

Harmonising that intent with classic songwriting chops, spiced with what Ford calls Gore's "twisted chords", has generated songs with the nagging, ethereal splendour of Enjoy The Silence – a transatlantic Top 10 in 1990 – and the current Ghosts Again, but Depeche Mode are the first to admit the process can be confounding. Gore recalls the recording of *Songs Of Faith And Devotion* as particularly agonising: an experience that convinced Alan Wilder – their omni-musical fourth wheel since *Construction Time Again* – that it was time to quit. "After the first six weeks of recording in Madrid we didn't have anything we could use," rues Gore. "But we did have a reggae version of Judas (*laughs*)."

Ford is credited with oiling those wheels. Yet the producer was surprised to get the call to help out on *Memento Mori*; recording *Spirit* had been "fractious" and "intense" despite all his attempts at mediation. And he was surprised a second time when he was told that recording would start as scheduled. And a third time, when the work began.

"It was like it wasn't even the same band," says Ford. "It was just a very differ-

Kevin Westenberg (3), Kort Havens (3), Shutterstock

ent energy. It was like the brush with mortality had brought about a paradigm shift in everyone's outlook, their sense of what's important and what matters. It's a strange upshot of such a tragic thing."

Ford sensed an openness to ideas, and a common purpose he'd not seen on *Spirit*. Not to mention a mood of tenderness and loss that found itself into the songs.

"There are lots of references to death, and endings," says Ford. "There's a weird prescience about the songs. And it has a melancholic beauty I haven't heard in a Depeche record for a while."

After *Spirit*'s outward focus, *Memento Mori* is once again a record of personal exploration, and breakthroughs. Through Covid and after, Gahan had hit a wall – "I didn't know what the songs were for; I didn't know *why* I was writing" – until Speak To Me arrived, seeming to encapsulate the whole struggle, and its meaning.

"I could hear this melody. I could hear some words, but I didn't have my phone with me so I had to rush home to get it down," he recalls. "It's like that thing Keith Richards says – the song's floating around and if you don't nail it down it'll fly off to fucking Neil Young or someone. And getting Speak To Me down was part of my decision – I've got to do this."

For Gahan, Depeche Mode is still enough a part of the answer to the question "who am I?" to keep him interested. It's a healthier route to self-knowledge than some he's tried.

"Drugs for me, for a long time, were the answer," he says. "Specifically, my drug of choice, heroin. I'll be honest, when it was working, I didn't need anything else. I didn't care what anyone else thought. It was some kind of nirvana. And when I stopped using it was an incredible loss. I know that sounds awful. It was a relationship that I had that felt pure to me and honest. And it was just *mine*. Very small, but manageable."

Gahan laughs apologetically. MOJO suggests that beyond its reality to him, addiction, along with religion, is one of those metaphors that music would struggle to live without – the things that fill the holes in people's lives.

"Music has been the one truth throughout my life," says Gahan. "It's always been the thing that's corrected me, or at least put me back onto some kind of path of hopefulness of belonging. I can't say that about many other things in life. I mean film, maybe? But people – no."

WITH THEIR TOUR LOOMING, GAHAN AND Gore have two more immediate questions to answer. How will it feel, the first time they take the stage without Fletcher? And can Gahan summon the version of himself who hypnotises 40,000 people a night, every night? It's daunting but, he says, he hates to complain. After all, "Fletch passing is a reminder that life *is* fleeting."

"What's the old saying?" he adds. "You can't look a gift horse in the mouth? I've always gone, 'This is the last tour! I'm not doing this again!' But what if I don't actually get the *choice* to do this again? Yeah. So I'd better fucking enjoy it."

That band from the '80s made it to the 2020s. Not intact. Far from it. But still moving forwards.

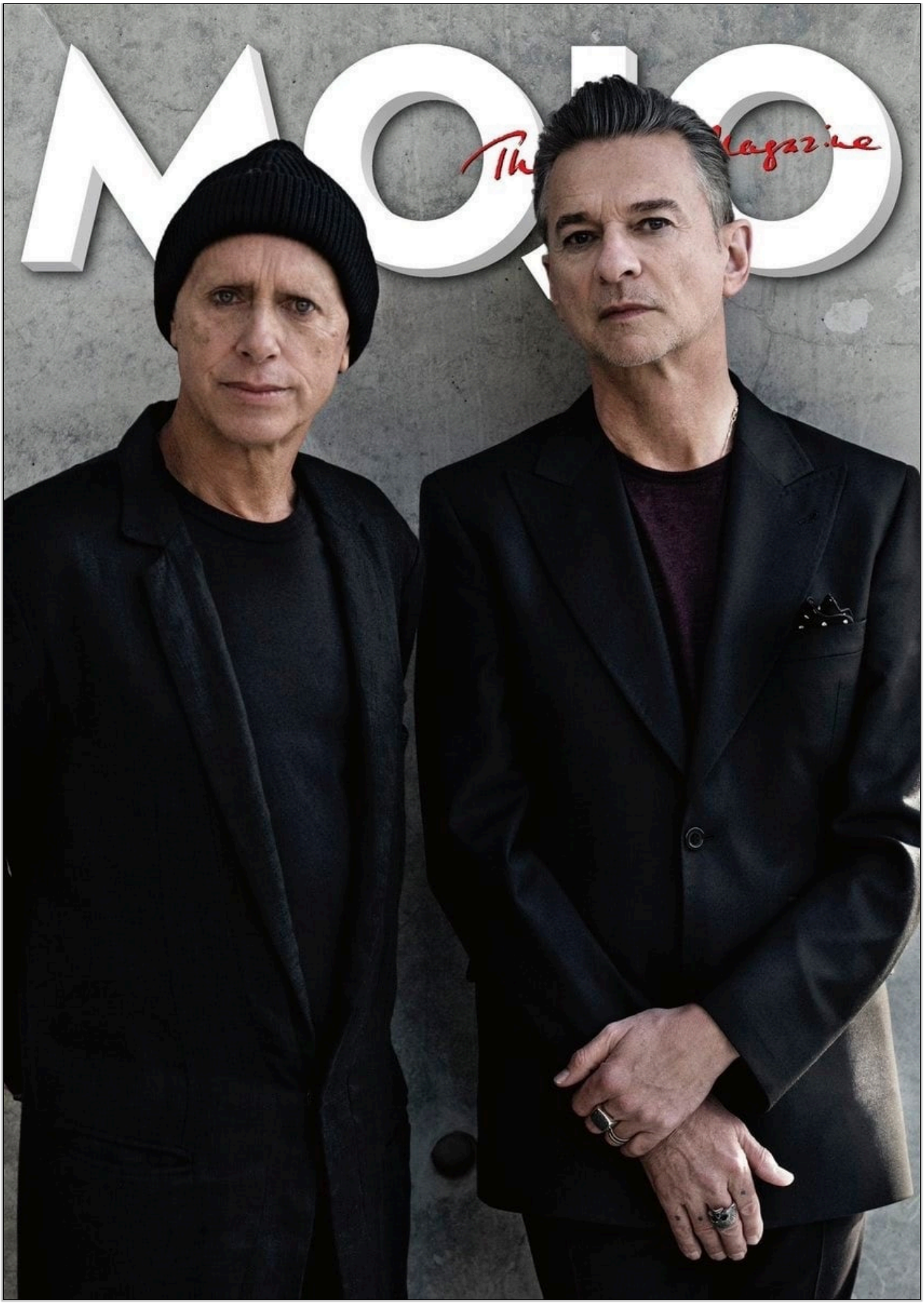
"We're exploring," says Gahan. "We've always been willing to, like, open the door: atmospherically, musically, or whatever. This time Martin took a big risk, opened himself up, to write with someone else."

And Depeche Mode with a dash of Richard Butler is still Depeche Mode…

"And what's Depeche Mode?" asks Gahan. "We don't know what that really is still. We're still trying to figure it out. But it's come much further than this kid from Essex ever imagined. I think Martin feels the same."

Gahan beams broadly.

"It's been magnificent."


MOJO

Depeche Mode – Classics. Rarities. Revelations.

Mojo Magazine CD – April 2023

1. Ice Machine (Single Version) 03:52
2. Somebody (Remix) 04:21
3. A Question Of Time (New Town Mix) 06:46
4. Never Let Me Down Again (Tsangarides Mix) 04:22
5. Enjoy The Silence (Harmonium) 02:42
6. Sea Of Sin (Sensoria) 06:04
7. I Feel You (Seven Inch Mix) 04:35
8. Condemnation (Paris Mix) 03:21
9. Barrel Of A Gun (Underworld Hard Mix) 09:38
10. Useless (Remix) 04:52
11. When The Body Speaks (Acoustic Version) 06:00
12. Suffer Well (Tiga Remix) 06:27
13. Come Back 05:15
14. Should Be Higher (Jim Sclavunos From Grinderman Remix) 04:11
15. Going Backwards (Highline Sessions Version) 05:25

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Rear of card sleeve states: "Special thanks to Depeche Mode A 23.Ears production for MOJO Magazine Sailing On A Sea Of Sin Dave Henderson Enjoying The Silence Carl Lawrence Condemned Mark Wagstaff Thanks to BC, Shaun Cohen,and Elliot Stubbs at Sony Music, Danny Eccleston Sold with MOJO 353 April 2023. Not for resale."*

1 Ice Machine (Single Version)
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13 Come Back
14 Should Be Higher (Jim Sclavunos from Grinderman Remix)
15 Going Backwards (Highline Sessions Version)
MOJO

AUDIO | RELEASES

PRODUCTION DETAILS TRACK

"Ice Machine" 03:52 • Produced by Depeche Mode and Daniel Miller. Engineered by Eric Radcliffe and John Fryer.

"Somebody" (Remix) 04:21 • Produced by Depeche Mode, Daniel Miller and Gareth Jones. Recorded at Music Works, London. Mixed at Hansa Mischraum, Berlin.

"A Question of Time" (New Town Mix) 06:46 • Remixed by Rico Conning.

"Never Let Me Down Again" (Tsangarides Mix) 04:22 • Remixed by John Fryer and Paul Kendall.

"Enjoy The Silence" (Harmonium) 02:42 • Mixed by Depeche Mode at The Church, London. Engineered by Steve Lyon.

"Sea of Sin" (Sensoria) 06:04 • Mixed by Francois Kervorkian at Axis Studios, New York. Engineered by Lloyd Puckitt. Additional production by Alan Friedman.

"I Feel You" (Seven Inch Mix) 04:35 • Mixed By Depeche Mode, Flood, Mark Stent.

"Condemnation" (Paris Mix) 03:21 • Produced by Depeche Mode and Flood. Enginered by Steve Lyon. Recorded in Madrid, May 1992. Additional production and remix by Alan Wilder and Steve Lyon at Guillaume Tell Studios, Paris.

"Barrel Of A Gun" (Underworld Hard Mix) 09:38 • Remix and additional production by Underworld.

"Useless" (Remix) 04:52 • Remixed by Alan Moulder and Daniel Miller at Whitfield St. Studios, London.

"When The Body Speaks" (Acoustic Version) 06:00 • Produced by Mark Bell. Engineered by Gareth Jones. Mixed by Steve Fitzmaurice. Solo cello by Knox Chandler. Strings by Todd C. Reynolds, Joyce Hammann, Natalie Cenovia Cummins, Ralph H. Farris and Leo Grinhauz. String arrangement by Knox Chandler.

"Suffer Well" (Tiga Remix) 06:27 • Remix by Jesper Dahlback, Tiga.

"Come Back" 05:15 • Produced by Ben Hillier for 140dB. Mixed by Tony Hoffer. Engineered by Ferg Peterkin. Programming by Luke Smith. Assistant Engineer: Josh Garcia (Santa Barbara), Jesse Gladstone (New York) & Anthony Palazzole (New York, Mixing). Pre-production assistance by Sie Medway-Smith - Grabbing Hands. Mastered by Stephen Marcussen for Marcussen Mastering, Hollywood, CA.. Original programming by Christian Eigner & Andrew Phillpott.

"Should Be Higher" (Jim Sclavunos from Grinderman Remix) 04:11 • Remixed by Jim Sclavunos.

"Going Backwards" (Highline Sessions Version) 05:25 • Lead Vocals: Dave Gahan, Guitar and Backing Vocals: Martin Gore, Keyboard: Andrew Fletcher, Rhodes Piano: Kurt Uenala, Synth Bass: Matrixxman, Produced and mixed by Kurt Uenala at Blanco Studios, NYC, Recorded by Jimmy Robertson at Highline Stages, NYC on August 3rd 2016, Recording Assistance by Brendan Morawski.

00:04 *03:53*

- **DEPECHE MODE** **Ice Machine**

DEPECHE MODE **Somebody (Remix)**

DEPECHE MODE **A Question Of Time (New Town Mix)**

DEPECHE MODE **Never Let Me Down Again (Tsangarides Mix)**

DEPECHE MODE **Enjoy The Silence (Harmonium))**

DEPECHE MODE **Sea Of Sin (Sensoria)**

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DEPECHE MODE **Come Back**

DEPECHE MODE **Should Be Higher (Jim Sclavunos From Grinderman Remix)**

DEPECHE MODE **Going Backwards (Highline Sessions Version)**

discussion

2023